

CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

(For NJC for Local Government Services Employees)

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SECTION 1 - Appointment and Salaries

1.1 Probation

You will be required to complete satisfactorily a probationary period of six months' service, during which time, your conduct, performance and attendance will be monitored and discussed with you regularly and at least after months one and three. Where the probation period has been successful, a final review will take place at the end of the probation period to confirm the successful probation period and your employment status.

If you fail to reach the required standard during the first five months of the probation period, a further review meeting will take place no later than the end of the fifth month.

Failure to complete the probationary period satisfactorily may result in the employment being terminated. In some circumstances, where performance is of considerable concern and detrimental to service delivery, the probationary period may be terminated before the end of the 6 month period.

Further information can be found in the Probationary Service Review Guidelines on the intranet or by contacting Human Resources.

1.2 Salaries

Salaries are based on the NJC for Local Government Services National Agreement on Pay.

Annual increments within salary scales are paid on 1st April each year, until the maximum of the scale is reached. If you start your employment between 1st October and 31st March, you will receive an increment after 6 months from the start date. If you start employment between 1 March and 31st August you will receive an increment 6 months after the start date. If you are on Soulbury Conditions you will receive an increment on 1st September each year.

Increments may be withheld for unsatisfactory service

General increases in your salary are negotiated nationally and normally operate from the 1st April, (or the 1st September if you are on Soulbury Conditions)

In addition, for those on Soulbury Conditions, there is an agreed framework to recognise the contribution of Soulbury officers through a structured professional assessment to be made locally.

All salaries are paid on the 27th of each month. Where the 27th is a weekend or Bank Holiday, payment will be made on the last working day before this date. Authorised travelling expenses for the previous month will be included with the monthly pay provided that claims have been submitted by the 8th of the month. Payment is made directly into the employee's bank or building society account.

1.3 **Overtime**

Overtime will be managed subject to business need and will not normally be paid during the hours covered by the flexible working hours scheme.

Overtime is payable only to employees in receipt of basic salary scp 28 or less on the following basis:-

- Employees where contracted to work longer than the standard 37 hours are recognised by some other recognised payments or arrangements.
- For overtime worked on any day other than a Sunday, or a general or public holiday, payment shall be a time and a half. For overtime on a Sunday payment shall be at double time.
- In exceptional cases, where planned overtime is carried out by employees who do not qualify for overtime payments, such overtime must be authorised in advance for a specified period, and an honorarium paid.
- Social workers, employees in residential homes and education welfare officers are excluded from the scope of this paragraph, with the exception of the provision relating to planned overtime payments.
- Part-time employees are entitled to the overtime enhancement only at times and in circumstances in which full-time employees would qualify. Otherwise a full working week for full time-time employees should be worked by a part time employee before these enhancements apply.

1.4 **Job Evaluation**

The Council has two job evaluation schemes for assessing jobs and determining pay and grading structures.

The Hay job evaluation scheme is used for posts from spinal column point 37 and above and the NJC scheme for all posts below scp 37.

Further details are available from Human Resources.

1.5 **Periods of Notice**

The service of employees shall be terminated by notice in writing on either side as follows:

1.5.1 **Notice by employees:**

Chief Executive	6 months
Directors and Assistant Directors	4 months
Heads of Service and all staff paid on Spinal column point 30 and above	3 months
Other staff	1 month

1.5.2 **Notice by employers – 1 week per year of service with minimum periods as above**

Maximum periods:

Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors	3 months
Other staff	12 weeks

SECTION 2 – Hours and Leave

2.1 Office Hours

(a) Office hours will be:

Monday to Thursday	-	8:30 am to 5:30 pm
Friday	-	8:30 am to 4:30 pm

All offices will be staffed during these hours.

(b) A system of flexible working hours has been agreed by the Council.

2.2 Flexitime Scheme

Staff will be required to work the hours set out in their contract of employment, however, at the discretion of the Assistant Director, and in accordance with operational requirements, staff will be able to participate in the following flexitime scheme. The flexitime scheme is designed to help you manage your work commitments alongside your family and social activities.

However we provide services to a community with very varied needs and therefore there may be service areas, or occasions when flexitime will not be practical.

Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service are excluded for these flexitime arrangements.

2.2.1 Spirit of the Agreement

The standard working week is 37 hours. All staff working 6 hours or more per day must take a minimum lunch break of 30 minutes.

There must be sufficient staff available during public opening hours to ensure an efficient level of service is maintained. The level of staffing required will be determined by the Assistant Director or his/her nominee in accordance with the individual operational requirements of the service.

While the flexitime scheme provides flexibility it is also important that managers and colleagues have a good understanding of the general pattern of hours worked by colleagues to ensure adequate staffing for service delivery. Flexitime schemes work well provided everyone acts responsibly recognising the requirements of the service.

2.2.2 Recording of Time

Working hours are recorded by staff on a standard flexitime sheet. All completed time sheets will be checked, countersigned and retained for at least 12 months by the immediate line manager. All staff working flexitime must complete a weekly time sheet. The flexitime sheet should show any annual leave or sickness absence.

2.2.3 Overtime

Time worked during flexible working hours will not normally be considered for overtime payments. Where work between these hours results in a credit of more than the agreed maximum, the extra hours must be subtracted from the flexitime recording sheet but, with Director approval, may be transferred to an overtime claim form or to request time off in lieu.

2.2.4 Credit/Debit

Staff may carry over up to ten hours credit or five hours debit from the end of one four week accounting period to the next. Staff exceeding the agreed maximum credit limit will forfeit any excess hours.

By arrangement with your manager/supervisor, flexi leave/credit hours may be taken in the following 4 week accounting period based on a working day of 7 hours 24 minutes or a half a day 3 hours 42 minutes. Flexi leave must be authorised in advance using the same procedures as annual leave and will be dependent on maintaining a satisfactory level of cover in the office at all times.

Flexi leave can only be booked following the month in which the additional hours have accrued.

2.2.5 Staff Working a Shift Pattern or Fixed Hours

In order to ensure that a satisfactory service to the public is maintained at all times, it will not be possible for staff working a shift pattern or fixed hours to participate in the full flexitime scheme. The extent to which flexibility with working hours can be agreed will be determined by the Assistant Director.

2.2.6 Exceptional Transport Delays

As hours can be made up, and staff have the advantage of flexible working hours, the council expects the normal hazards of transport delays to be accepted.

2.3 Annual Leave

The amount of leave employees receive depends upon length of continuous service with Local Government or other public bodies specified in the Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) Order 1983. The leave year runs from 1 April to 31 March. Leave entitlements are:

- Up to 5 years' continuous service - 24 days
- Completion of 5 years' continuous service - 29 days
- Completion of 10 years' continuous service - 31 days

Employees will receive the additional days' leave (on a pro rata basis) in the leave year in which the 5th or 10th anniversary of appointment falls.

Applications for annual leave must be approved by line management before holiday plans are confirmed. Approval will be dependent on maintaining a satisfactory level of cover in offices at all times.

If you leave the Council, for whatever reason, during the leave year and have taken more leave that you have built up in the period, the salary that has been paid in respect of the extra leave will be deducted from the final month's salary.

2.3.1 **Part- time Employees**

Annual leave will accrue on a pro rata basis for part-time employees.

2.4 **Public Holidays**

Employees are entitled to public/bank holidays.

2.5 **Carry Over/Bringing Forward of Annual Leave**

(a) Up to five days outstanding leave (pro rata for part time staff) may be carried forward to the following leave year, on a non-cumulative basis.

(b) In exceptional circumstances, and with the approval of the appropriate Assistant Director, a maximum of five days leave (pro rata for part time staff) may be brought forward from the next leave year to be taken no earlier than January in the current leave year.

(c) Employees who are on long term sick leave at the end of a leave year will be entitled either to carry over any outstanding leave to the next leave year or, in exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the appropriate Assistant Director to be paid for a proportion of the outstanding leave.

2.6 **Leave for attending medical appointments**

Staff should use flexi time to attend all medical appointments, (i.e. GP, optician, or dentist).

If possible, an employee should try to arrange a hospital appointment in their own time, using flexi time where appropriate. If it is not possible special leave i.e. paid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Assistant Director.

2.7 **Annual Leave during Probationary Period**

Newly appointed staff shall be entitled to annual leave proportionate to the completed months of service, subject to the approval of the Assistant Director or his/her nominee.

If an employee leaves before completing six months service, an appropriate adjustment will be made to the final salary payment if necessary.

2.8 **Other Leave**

The Council recognises that, in addition to annual leave, there are occasions which necessitate absence from work. All employees, regardless of length of service and hours worked, have the right to take reasonable time off to deal with certain 'life events' and occasional unexpected problems. Guidelines in relation to all areas of 'other leave' can be obtained from Human Resources.

SECTION 3 – Sickness Absence

3.1 Notification of Sickness Absence

If you cannot get to work because you are sick you must always let your manager know or a nominated person, giving the reason for your absence and to say when you think you are likely to be able to return to work. This should be done by telephone within one hour of your normal start time/no later than 09:30 am on the first day of absence.

It is not normally acceptable for someone to telephone on your behalf unless you are really unable to get to a telephone/use your mobile, or for you to phone a colleague.

Notification must include:

- (a) confirmation of first day of absence
- (b) the first day of illness, even though this may not be a working day
- (c) the anticipated return to work date, if known
- (d) the reason for the absence

3.2 Certification of Absence

You must complete a self-certificate form for all absences. The form is available from the Intranet or your manager and must be completed on your first day back at work.

If you are absent for more than 7 days, you must produce a medical certificate from your doctor. This must be sent to the appropriate line manager, or Human Resources, as soon as it is received by the employee.

If you do not follow this procedure you risk losing pay.

If your first medical certificate covers a period exceeding 14 days or where you need more than one certificate before you return to work you must obtain a final statement from your doctor with a date declaring you are fit to return to work.

3.3 Sickness Payments

An employee absent from work owing to illness, injury or other disability shall be entitled to leave as set out below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| During 1st year of service | - 1 month's full sick pay and (after completing 4 months' service – 2 months' half sick pay) |
| During 2nd year of service | - 2 months' full sick pay and 2 months half sick pay |
| During 3 rd year of service | - 4 months' full sick pay and 4 months half sick pay |
| During 4 th & 5 th year | - 5 months full sick pay and 5 months half sick pay |
| After 5 years service | - 6 months full sick pay and 6 months half sick pay |

A copy of the Council's Managing Sickness Absence Policy can be found on the Intranet. If you do not have access to the Intranet please contact Human Resources.

3.3.1 Occupational Health and Counselling Services

The Council provides access to Occupational Health and Counselling Services via the Occupational Health and Wellbeing team which is based in Bedford. The services are confidential, full details of their services can be found on the Intranet.

SECTION 4 – Health & Safety

4.1 Health & Safety Policy

The Council recognises and accepts its responsibilities as an employer to ensure, as far as it reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all its employees whilst at work.

In addition, all employees have not only a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety but also of other persons who may not be employees but affected by their acts or omissions.

Complete information on all health and safety matters can be found in the Health and Safety Manual, which is available on the intranet. An employee who has any concerns regarding health and safety should speak to his/her line manager in the first instance.

4.2 Mobile Phones/Driving

It is the Council's policy that employees must not use either a hand held mobile phone or a hands-free unit when driving. This policy applies to all employees who drive Central Bedfordshire Council vehicles, as well as employees who use their own private vehicle for work purposes.

Further information can be found in the Health and Safety Manual and the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

4.3 Eyesight Testing

If you use any display screen equipment you will be entitled to an eye test paid for by the Council. To obtain a form and further details please contact Occupational Health Services.

4.4 No Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted inside any Central Bedfordshire establishment including all the three main office sites and the many other locations both within Bedford and across the Central Bedfordshire area. Appropriate signs are posted at all entrances and throughout the workplace

Managers of establishments are responsible for designating suitable external smoking areas. These should be away from entrances and access paths and suitable receptacles should be provided.

SECTION 5 – Travelling, Subsistence and Allowances

5.1 General

Travelling and subsistence allowances are payable to employees who incur necessary expenses as a result of carrying out official duties which are properly authorised by the Council.

The allowances are based upon the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service.

It is very important that complete details of journeys undertaken are given on the form and that the form is signed and authorised correctly, so that the claim may be processed for payment without delay. Claim forms may be returned when insufficient or incorrect details are shown. All mileage claim forms must be supported by a VAT receipt for petrol covering the period when the business miles were undertaken.

Details of all the travel and subsistence allowances can be found on the Intranet.

5.2 Travelling

Travelling expenses necessarily incurred by employees in the performance of their duties will be reimbursed, after proper authorisation, by the Council.

Journeys should be authorised by the Assistant Director concerned, or by his/her nominee, to whom all claims should be submitted for approval.

5.3 Car Allowances

There are 2 categories of car allowance namely:

5.3.1 Essential User

Essential User – where the nature of the job requires the post holder to travel both regularly and extensively.

- (1) Regularly means that the **primary** purpose of the job requires the post holder to travel in order to carry out their duties.
- (2) Extensively means that business mileage will usually be more than 2,000 each year. However, the Council seeks to minimise the impact on the environment of travel by car and therefore expects all officers to minimise mileage wherever possible. Exceeding 2,000 miles in any one year will not automatically mean that the post will attract essential user status.

Essential User Allowance

Employees in receipt of an Essential User Car Allowance will receive:

- A lump sum allowance in accordance with the lower 2 bands of the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).
- A mileage allowance for each mile travelled on official business in accordance with the lower 2 bands of the NJC rates which is paid monthly

5.3.2 **Casual User**

Directors or nominees who ask other employees to use their vehicles can authorise reimbursement of mileage at casual user rates.

Casual User Allowance

Employees who qualify for a Casual User's Car allowance receive a mileage allowance for each mile travelled on official business which is paid monthly on submission of an authorised mileage claim. The mileage allowance paid will be in accordance with the lower 2 bands of the NJC rates.

5.4 **Insurance and Documentation**

Employees must have included and must maintain in their policy of insurance, a clause indemnifying the Council against all third party claims (including passengers) arising out of the use of the vehicle on official business. A current, valid UK driving licence must also be held and employees in receipt of an essential user car allowance may be requested to produce this at any time upon reasonable notice. For vehicles over 3 years of age, a current MOT certificate must also be maintained.

5.5 **Subsistence Allowances**

Subsistence allowances are paid by the Council to employees, prevented by their official duties from taking a meal at their home, their normal place of work, or within a Council provided facility and who incur additional expenditure.

Subsistence will not normally be paid when the employee remains within the County, except for employees on training away from their place of work for more than 4 hours.

Re-imbursement will be for actual expenditure incurred, up to an agreed limit. Claims will be reduced by an agreed 'normal' expenditure amount, currently £1.50, to reflect the expenditure an individual would incur under normal circumstances

Mobile library employees, who regularly find themselves in isolated locations, are allowed a maximum of £1.00 per day.

Subsistence claims should not be made where the council has made direct payment or provision for this type of cost, such as at conferences where meals and beverages are included.

Claims must be supported by a VAT receipt.

Subsistence allowances will be payable in accordance with the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book). Details of current rates are published on the Intranet.

5.6 **Benefits**

5.6.1 **Local Government Pension Scheme**

The local Government Pension Scheme is open to all employees up to 75 years of age and with a contract of more than 3 months' duration.

You will automatically become a member unless you opt not to join. If you are employed on a casual basis, or if you do not have a contract of more than 3 months' duration you will not be eligible to join the scheme.

Your contribution will be between 5.5% and 7.5% of your pay, exclusive of overtime or any honoraria payment. The percentage that you pay is determined by your full time equivalent (FTE) pay. The higher your FTE pay, the higher your contribution rate will be.

Your contributions will be deducted from your salary before you pay tax. So far example if you pay tax at the rate of 22%, every £1 that you contribute to the Scheme only costs you 78 pence net.

Further details of the above Schemes, together with an Employee Guide are available from Bedfordshire Pensions Administration, the HR team or from the Intranet.

5.6.2 **Car Parking**

There is substantial free car parking available at the 3 main Council locations, however, a parking space cannot be guaranteed. Designated car parking spaces are reserved for disabled drivers at all Council locations. Car sharing is encouraged and designated car parking spaces are also reserved for car sharers.

5.6.3 **Childcare Provision.**

The Council, in conjunction with Busy Bees, has introduced Childcare Vouchers which can be exchanged in whole, or part, for the childcare services used. Further information can be obtained from Busy Bees on 08000 430 860; (www.Busybeesvouchers.com) or Human Resources.

The Council has negotiated a corporate discount for childcare at Kiddi Caru Nursery which is located close to Borough Hall. For further information contact the Manager on (01234) 272262.

The Early Birds Nursery is situated in Chester Road, Bedford and caress for 40 children aged between 0 and 9 years. The workplace nursery is open Monday to Thursday 8.00am to 5.30pm and Friday 8.00am to 4.40pm for full time or sessional care. For further information contact the Manager on (01234) 316354. The email address is: early.birds@bedford.gov.uk

5.6.4 **Leisure Centres**

There are discounts available for employees at various Leisure Centres within the District. Further information is available from Human Resources.

5.6.5 **Season Ticket (Rail) Scheme**

This benefit is offered to employees as part of the Council's Travel Plan. Further details and an application form are available from the Intranet.

The Staff Season Ticket Loan Scheme is valid for all rail operators. Please note that if you already have a season ticket loan through the scheme you will not be eligible for another until you have paid off your existing loan. The loan must be paid off before the expiry of the season ticket and will therefore run for the same time period.

5.6.6 **Discount Shopping**

The Council has negotiated discounts for employees with a range of companies offering products and services. Further information can be obtained from Human Resources.

SECTION 6 – Conduct and Performance

6.1 Equal Opportunities

The Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment. All employees are afforded equal opportunities in employment, irrespective of disability, gender, race, religion, age, sexuality and marital status. The Council will ensure that discriminatory practices are identified and removed and that non-discriminatory practices operate in all areas of employment, including recruitment, training and promotion.

The Council is also committed to eliminating bullying in the workplace, unfair discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of race, sex, marital status, disability, age, sexual orientation, trade union membership and activity, political or religious belief and unrelated criminal convictions.

The Council's Equalities Policy and Race Equality Scheme can be found on the intranet and further information can be obtained from Human Resources.

6.2 Code of Conduct

6.2.1 General Principles

The public is entitled to expect the highest standards of conduct from all local government officers. The role of such officers is to serve the Council in providing advice, implementing its policies and delivering services to the local community. In performing their duties, officers must act with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity.

The Code has been drawn up to provide the Council's officers with guidance on how they will be expected to conduct themselves when carrying out duties and responsibilities associated with their employment. The Code has also been designed to take account of other relevant codes of practice.

The term 'officer' refers to all the Council's employees. It also includes consultants and agency staff who work for the Council.

Officers are accountable and owe a duty to the Council as their employer. They must act in accordance with the principles set out in this Code, recognising the duty of all public sector employees to discharge public functions reasonably and according to the law.

Officers must be familiar with and adhere to the Protocol for Member / Officer Relations at Part F4 of the Constitution. A copy of the Constitution can be found on the Intranet.

It is not practical to establish requirements that apply to all situations and circumstances and, therefore, the Code should be regarded as covering only the basic principles to be followed.

Directors are responsible for the administration and application of the Code within the service areas for which they are responsible.

6.2.2 Openness/Confidentiality

Generally, openness in the dissemination of information and decision-making should be normal practice. However, certain information may be confidential or sensitive and therefore should not be disclosed.

Officers have an obligation to respect the confidentiality of information about the Council's affairs acquired in the course of their work. Where confidentiality is necessary to protect the privacy or other rights of individuals or bodies, information should not be released to anyone other than a member or another officer of the Council or a person who is entitled to receive it, or needs access to it for the proper discharge of his/her functions.

Officers must not prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.

Nothing in the code can be taken as overriding existing statutory or common law obligations to divulge certain information or to keep certain information confidential.

6.2.3 Conflicts of Interest

Officers must not allow their private interests to conflict with their professional duty. They must not use their official position or information acquired in the course of their employment to further their private interests or the interests of others.

If officers find themselves in a situation which could give rise to a conflict of interest between themselves, or some other person, and the Council, then the matter must be reported in the first instance to their immediate line manager and the Monitoring Officer. If the problem cannot be resolved then the position must be reported immediately to the Head of Service.

All potential conflict of interests must be declared and registered with the Council and be made available for Members' inspection.

6.2.4 Interests in Contracts

Employees must give immediate notice to the Council if it comes to their knowledge that they have a pecuniary interest in a contract that has been or is proposed to be entered into by the Council.

6.2.5 Hospitality & Gifts

In undertaking their duties officers may be offered gifts or hospitality from persons or organisations having, or proposing to have, a contractual or client relationship with the Council. Such offers could be made to gain an advantage over another person or organisation or could be construed as such and therefore must be declined.

If officers receive a gift of any description then this must be made known to their Head of Service who will decide on the course of action to be taken. Likewise only hospitality for which prior approval has been given by your Head of Service should be accepted from outside persons or organisations.

Any gifts or hospitality agreed and accepted will be recorded in writing in the register maintained by each Director for their service areas. The Chief Executive and all Directors should record the receipt of any gifts or hospitality they receive in the register maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

6.2.6 Integrity and Personal Conduct

Off-duty hours are the concern of officers but conduct at all times must not in any way bring the Council into disrepute or weaken the public's confidence in officers or the Council.

Certain officers are required by their contract of employment to devote their whole time to the work of the Council. However, officers employed in a relatively junior capacity may be able to undertake other additional work or employment, provided prior approval is obtained from the Head of Service. However, any such employment must not conflict with the Council's interests or in any way weaken public confidence in the Council.

Officers must not advise any political group of the Council either about the work of the group or about the work of the directorate, without the prior consent of their Head of Service. Personal political activities must not in any way bring the Council into disrepute.

Certain posts are politically restricted under Section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and officers who are subject to these political restrictions must comply with the statutory restrictions on their political activities.

6.2.7 Stewardship

An officer must:

- use any public funds entrusted to or handled by him/her in a responsible and lawful manner;
- not make personal use of any property or facilities of the Council unless properly authorised to do so.

6.2.8 Aims, Visions and Values

Officers must follow and uphold the core values and expected standards of behaviour of the Council in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

6.2.9 Accountability

Officers are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner professionally; recognising that at all times when they are representing the Council they are ambassadors for the organisation.

At all times officers are, accountable to the Council for their actions.

6.2.10 Competence

Officers are encouraged to develop to their full potential and ability and be supported with suitable training and development. If they are worried about their ability to perform a particular task in the course of their employment, then no action should be taken until they have sought adequate advice and assistance to enable them to do so satisfactorily.

While the above advice is intended to help, it must not be interpreted as a right for officers to refuse to undertake duties and responsibilities that may be reasonably allocated to them by their manager.

6.2.11 Equality and Respect for Others

Officers must comply with the Council's policies relating to equality issues.

Officers must at all times:

- Treat others with respect
- Not discriminate unlawfully against any person; and
- Treat members and co-opted members of the Authority professionally.

6.2.12 Working Relationships

Officers should always try to be fair and not allow prejudice or bias to influence them in carrying out their work. They must not allow their own personal or political opinions to interfere with their work.

Officers should deal with members sympathetically, efficiently and without bias.

Mutual respect between officers and members of the Council is essential to good local government and working relationships should be kept on a professional basis.

6.2.13 Whistle Blowing/Confidential Reporting Procedure

Where an officer becomes aware of activities which he/she believes to be illegal, improper, unethical or otherwise inconsistent with this Code, he/she should report the matter acting in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, the Council's confidential reporting ('whistle blowing') procedure and any other procedure designed for this purpose. A copy of this Procedure can be found within the Ethical Handbook, which is part of the Council's Constitution.

An officer must not discriminate against another officer by reason of the fact that the other officer has done, intends to do, or is suspected of doing anything under or by reference to Council's procedure for reporting misconduct or under the Council's confidential reporting procedure.

6.2.14 Appointment of Staff

When involved in the recruitment and appointment of staff, officers must ensure that appointments are made on the basis of merit.

In order to avoid any accusation of bias, an officer must not be involved in the appointment of or in any other decision relating to the discipline, promotion, pay or conditions of another officer, or prospective employee, to whom he/she is related or with whom he/she has a close personal relationship outside work.

Note: This Code is to be read in conjunction with the Council's Procedure Rules, Terms of Conditions of Employment and Statute Law where applicable.

6.3 **Disciplinary Policy**

The conduct of staff within Central Bedfordshire Council is a key factor in ensuring that the Council's vision, core values, aims and objectives and targets are delivered. All employees must demonstrate high standards of professional and personal conduct and treat all those with whom they have contact with respect and in line with the Council's procedures.

The Disciplinary Procedure is designed to help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct. The aim of the procedure is to ensure that all employees receive consistent, fair treatment.

The Council recognises that not all failures to comply with rules and procedures are of equal importance and neither do they require the same degree of severity of action. The Council believes that in most instances minor breaches of conduct can and should be dealt with informally and promptly by the line manager without recourse to the formal Disciplinary Procedure.

A copy of the Disciplinary Procedure can be found on the Intranet.

6.4 **Grievance Procedure**

The Council recognises that there may be occasions when an employee may feel aggrieved about an issue relating to employment and the Grievance Procedure provides a mechanism for dealing with such issues in a fair, consistent and prompt manner.

A copy of the Grievance Procedure can be found on the Intranet.

6.5 **Capability Policy**

The performance of Central Bedfordshire Council employees is vitally important in helping the Council to achieve its key objectives.

The Council is committed to the training and development of its employees so that they can undertake their duties to the highest possible standards.

However, the Council recognises that at times an individual's performance may be less than ideal, due to personal and other problems, and will seek to assist the employee during such times.

The aim of the Capability Policy is to support employees in fully performing their duties and to address issues of under-performance on a formal basis.

A copy of the Capability Procedure can be found on the Intranet.

6.6 **ICT Acceptable Use Policy**

To ensure business continuity and minimise business damage caused to its information and communication technology systems, the Council has adopted an ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

All persons having access to Council information, systems and equipment are responsible for adhering to the policy and must not use unauthorized software or internet systems to disseminate information.

In addition, all employees must adhere to the guidelines covering the use of electronic mail and internet use.

Further information can be found in the ICT Acceptable Use Policy on the Intranet or by contacting the Corporate ICT Team.

6.7 **Data Protection**

The Council has adopted a framework to ensure it can fulfil its obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

All employees have responsibilities under this Act to:

- process personal information in compliance with the Eight Data Protection Principles
- Make personal information available to data subjects following a valid subject access request according to the Officer Guidelines – Data Protection
- ensure any data transfer that takes place, whether hard copy or electronic, is necessary and is done so in the most secure and appropriate way
- ensure that they attend mandatory data protection training in accordance with Council training schedules.

Further information can be found in the Data Protection Policy on the intranet or by contacting the Data Protection Officer.

6.8 **Access to Personal Files**

All requests for employees to access their own personal file should be dealt with promptly. If it is not possible to deal with the matter straight away, then an appointment should be made for the individual to see their file as soon as possible thereafter, usually the same day.

At no time should individual employees be granted general access to the personal filing system. All meetings should therefore be supervised by the appropriate HR Adviser and should take place privately and in an office other than the one which houses the main filing system.

Personal files should at no time leave Human Resources offices.

In normal circumstances no personal files should be made available to anyone other than the individual employee concerned.

6.9 **Politically Restricted Posts**

Under the provisions of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989, the following posts are politically restricted:

- Head of the Authority's paid service, statutory Chief Officers and other Chief Officers.
- Deputy Chief Officers (as defined by the Act)
- Points at or above the specified salary level (equivalent to spinal column point 44) unless exemption is granted.
- Certain 'sensitive' posts; namely those giving advice on a regular basis to committees and those speaking on behalf of the Authority on a regular basis, to journalists and broadcasters, unless exemption is granted.

If an employee comes into one or more of the above categories, they would not be able to participate in any of the following activities:

- Candidature for public elected office (other than to a parish or community council)
- Acting as an election agent or sub-agent.
- Holding office in a political party
- Canvassing at elections
- Speaking or writing publicly other than in an official capacity, on matters of party political controversy.

SECTION 7 – Miscellaneous

7.1 Trade Union Membership

This authority, as an employer, supports the system of collective bargaining in every way and believes in the principle of solving employee relations problems by discussion and agreement. For practical purposes this can only be conducted by representatives of the employers and of the employees.

In exercising the right to belong, or not to belong, to the Trade Union of his/her choice, and to take part in its activities, each employee is asked to note that the Unions recognised by the Council are UNISON and GMB.